

December 10, 1996

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SUBJECT: **Deputy Secretary's Focus Report**

The following is a brief summary of Department of Transportation events and items of interest from the past month:

OPERATIONAL ITEMS:

NEW SPEED LIMIT SIGNS POSTED IN OLYMPIC REGION

Speed limits have been raised from 55 mph to 60 mph on 115 miles of multi-lane highways in Grays Harbor, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce and Thurston counties. Following a 30-day public comment period, the new speed limits were approved for sections of State Routes 3, 8, 16, 167 and 512, and US highways 12 and 101.

PENNY ROAD INTERCHANGE PROJECT COMES TO CLOSE

North Central Region's Penny Road Interchange in Sunnyslope at the north end of greater Wenatchee is essentially complete. This is a new interchange that serves the growing Sunnyslope area north of the Wenatchee River and west of the Columbia River. The current project has been constructed over the last fifteen months at an approximate cost of \$4,000,000. An earlier project, constructed in 1991 and 1992, addressed drainage and adjacent streets as part of the total project.

PROPOSED SAFETY REST AREA PARTNERSHIP UNDER DISCUSSION

Heritage Corridor Program (HCP) staff and Secretary Morrison met with a developer's attorney to via conference call to discuss a proposed public/private partnership to develop a new safety rest area on I-82. During the call, HCP staff discussed a preliminary cost/benefit analysis being done by South Central region and identified decision points along the way. The department agreed to summarize the major points of the issue and identify

appropriate WSDOT actions in reaching a decision on the proposed partnership.

ICE STORM LEAVES EASTERN REGION FROZEN

A severe ice storm hit the Spokane area and the Eastern Region on Tuesday, November 19. In the early hours of the storm, most roadways had ice building up on the surface. Region maintenance responded with a full crew sanding and using liquid de-icer. City and county roadways also had ice problems that were compounded by a heavy commute. The following days brought additional bad weather to the Region which was handled under normal snow and ice procedures although crews logged significant amounts of overtime during the events.

The biggest challenge of the winter weather event was the loss of electricity. Power to the Eastern Region headquarters complex was lost at about 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, with subsequent failures at most outlying maintenance sheds and project offices in Spokane County. Power was restored to the Regional Office at 7:15 a.m. on Thursday.

A major concern was the loss of power to 18 state-operated signal systems in the Spokane metropolitan area. The signals crew was able to provide generator power to five locations all at major ramp terminals during the evening commute period to assist traffic movement. Following the evening commute these signals were allowed to go black along with hundreds of signals throughout Spokane.

Signals were brought back into service slowly as power was restored section-by-section in the Spokane area. By mid-day Wednesday, eight state signals remained out of service, then dropping to four by Thursday afternoon. By Friday, electricity had been restored to all but one state signal. The final light was powered by a generator, returning the Region signals to full operation, although intermittent outages brought on by additional storms caused some problems. Damage resulting from freezing weather and falling trees is currently being assessed as well as the need for emergency generators.

HOV LANES SWITCHING SIDES ON I-405

Work is under way to begin switching the high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes from the right side (outside lane) of northbound and southbound Interstate 405 to the left side (inside lane) between Renton and the Interstate 90 interchange.

The HOV lane switch will occur as part of an ongoing construction project to install surveillance, control and driver information equipment on I-405 between Tukwila and Factoria. After the HOV lanes are switched, there will be left-side HOV lanes from Tukwila to the I-90 interchange, eliminating the existing HOV lane crossover in the Renton S-curves, where the HOV lane switches from one side of the freeway to the other.

The HOV lanes will remain on the left side when the project is completed in the fall of 1998. North of the I-90 interchange, the HOV lanes will remain on the right side of the freeway as they are now.

METERS REACTIVATED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ON-RAMP OPENING

A high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) on-ramp connecting eastbound and westbound State Route 104 (Ballinger Way and Northeast 205th Street) to southbound Interstate 5 south of Lynnwood opened November 6. The ramp, which had been closed for the last two years for construction activities, reopened for exclusive use by 2+ HOV carpools and transit.

At the same time that the HOV ramp opened, crews reactivated ramp meters at eastbound SR 104 to southbound I-5, westbound SR 104 to southbound I-5, and east and westbound traffic from 236th Street Southwest to southbound I-5. The ramps at both 236th Street Southwest and SR 104 have HOV bypass lanes available to allow transit and carpools to continue onto the freeway without stopping at the meters. The meters operate during morning weekday commute hours.

The ramp meters are expected to help smooth merges onto southbound I-5 and reduce accidents at merge points. They will also help improve mainline I-5 traffic flow and provide an incentive to carpool or use transit.

SEISMIC MAPS PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION

The WSDOT Geotech Branch met with members of the Bridge and Structures Office Seismic Steering Committee to discuss the new USGS Seismic Acceleration Coefficient Maps. The new maps give consideration to the possibility of a "subduction event" originating off the coast of Washington and Oregon. Inclusion of this information is an improvement in the seismic design information used by WSDOT for design of transportation structures. The primary design impact is to structures located near the Washington Coast. Changes and/or additions to the seismic design criteria will be made as needed. The Geotech Branch and the Bridge and Structures Office intend to incorporate this new information into designs immediately.

LILLY-WHEATON BRIDGE PORTAL CLEARANCE INCREASES

The South West Region Bridge Maintenance Crew finished the construction of a portal raising on the Lilly Wheaton bridge on State Route 6 near Raymond. The project eliminates the existing portal clearance of 14'-6" and raises it to 16'-6".

The new portal is a box beam that replaced the old truss members. This type of construction is not new, but it is the first time it has been utilized in a portal raising by the WSDOT. The truss portal on the Lilly Wheaton Bridge has been hit frequently by trucks using the bridge over the last ten years. Prior to the portal raising, the portal was hit on the average of twice a month over the past year.

TRB PROJECT HAS IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

The Environmental Affairs Office Research Manager and Senior Biologist participated in a Transportation Research Board (TRB) project that will define proposed environmental research for the next few years. A group of experts from across the country were invited to Washington D. C. to select the top research needs in each of the 12 areas, including wetlands, noise, air quality, water quality, waste management and others. Two areas that were selected, watershed-based mitigation analysis and fee-based compensation and preservation, are also of great interest to WSDOT. The list of selected projects will go to funding and grant agencies for review and selection of funding candidates.

AGENCY HEADS DISCUSS SEDIMENT CLEANUP

The Environmental Affairs Office provided support for a summit on sediment cleanup attended by six state and federal agencies. The November 7-8 Summit, organized by the Washington Department of Natural Resources, included the Washington Department of Ecology, WSDOT, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Participants discussed ways to coordinate sediment management budgets, the appropriateness of the current sediment quality standards, the status of the Bellingham Bay Pilot Project, and key issues affecting agencies' abilities to implement cleanup actions (public vs. private liability). WSDOT is affected by sediment cleanup issues related to stormwater runoff (which may contain contaminants) and by the operations of the ferries.

BELLINGHAM BAY SEDIMENT PILOT PROJECT UNDERWAY

The Environmental Affairs Office has been attending bimonthly meetings of the workgroup chartered to find new ways to clean up Bellingham Bay. The pilot project, co-sponsored by WSDOT, includes the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, the US Army Corps of Engineers, as well as the Port of Bellingham, Georgia Pacific, City of Bellingham, and the Lummi Nation.

The project marks the first attempt by various agencies to seek a cooperative, bay wide approach to sediment cleanup. While WSDOT has limited operations in this geographic area, the agency's participation will ensure that the successes (e.g., cost efficiency and predictability for terminals and vessel and highway construction) can be applied to other areas of the state. A cleanup work plan is expected to be finalized by the first of the year.

COMMEMORATION CEREMONY HELD AT DAYTON DEPOT

On November 1, 1996, the Port of Columbia held a ceremony at the historic Dayton Depot commemorating the restoration of rail service from Walla Walla to Dayton. The Dayton Depot is the oldest train station in Washington State and is preserved and maintained by the volunteers of the Dayton Depot Historical Society. The ceremony was attended by a host of dignitaries

including State Senators Valoria Loveland and Eugene Prince as well as State Representatives Dave Mastin and Bill Grant. The rail line was out of service since February of 1996 due to winter floods washing out bridges and trackage and was in danger of abandonment. A public/private partnership was forged between WSDOT, Port of Columbia, local rail shippers, and the Blue Mountain Railroad to preserve the railroad. The group effort included WSDOT's Rail Office providing conditional funds to repair the damaged rail line, the Port of Columbia assuming ownership of the 39-mile line from the Union Pacific Railroad, local shippers using the railroad to the maximum extent possible, and the Blue Mountain Railroad providing rail service even though the line had not generated any business in almost nine months.

ADA STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL MARKERS BEING REVIEWED

Staff from the WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Internal Civil Rights Branch (ICRB) is currently working with individuals from the Historical Corridors Project on information about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for informational markers placed in recreational and historical areas. They are particularly interested in designing the markers to enhance the ability of persons with disabilities to enjoy them. Staff from the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues advised that there were no formal standards for informational signage to recreational and historical sites. The only requirement known is that the signage should provide equal opportunity to persons with disabilities to benefit from the public areas. A meeting including staff from the Governor's Committee on Disability issues, Heritage Corridors Project individuals, and possibly a group of persons from the community with disabilities, will be scheduled to discuss the signage.

OEO STAFF BACK FROM AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WORKSHOP

Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) staff attended the Affirmative Action (AA)/Equal Opportunity (EO) Officers' Quarterly meeting at the Department of Labor and Industries Headquarters Auditorium on November 22, 1996. The purpose of the (quarterly) meeting is to provide a continuous forum for AA/EO officers to network and discuss current policy and trends, to provide training for development of technical expertise, and to support development of affirmative action programs and plans. The workshop presenter was Tim Wise, a national advocate and speaker on the topic of affirmative action, and the author of *Little White Lies: The Truth About Affirmative Action and "Reverse Discrimination,"* which is quickly becoming one of the most valued references for affirmative action professionals in Washington State.

ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS SAVE TIME & IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

TransAid has been in discussions with the Finance and Administration division about Electronic Funds Transfer in reverse. Currently, TransAid pays federal grant reimbursements to over 80 city and county governments through an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) process. TransAid also receives

payments for work done from over 360 local agencies with the payments coming in the form of paper warrants.

Electronic payments from local agencies can reduce the time and effort it takes to process cash, allowing WSDOT to provide better customer service. The Accounting Office already has one method in place which requires the local agency to coordinate with their bank to actually make the transfer. Other options are being examined that could be more "customer friendly". WSDOT has been approached by the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development to work jointly with the Office of the State Treasurer to develop a simple process that would appeal to a wide range of customers.

KIDS WALK SAFELY THANKS TO OIL REBATE GRANT

Three million in Oil Rebate dollars will be funding approximately 65 projects that will eliminate hazardous walking conditions within one mile of schools. It is estimated that these grants will benefit a total of 7,000 students. Regional TransAid engineers have been making contacts with successful applicants to determine if the projects are still viable, the minimum 50% local match is available, and whether the projects can be completed by the summer of 1998. TransAid is in the process of sending out award letters to those agencies which have indicated that their project(s) are ready to proceed.

As for future funding, TransAid and Traffic Office staff have met with the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (SPI) Transportation Office staff to discuss whether there is financial support from SPI to continue this program for the long term, recognizing that improvements to walkways could significantly reduce bus transportation costs. SPI demonstrated support but there was no commitment that it would be a top priority on the SPI legislative agenda.

TRANSAID ENCOURAGEMENT NETS FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

Last spring, a national call-for-projects under FHWA's Ferry Boat Discretionary Program was made and four projects from Washington State (three local agency and one DOT - WSF Division) were submitted for federal consideration. On November 15, 1996, two local agencies projects were selected. The winners were: Skagit County - Anacortes Terminal Parking Facility (Guemes Is. Ferry) - \$155,000 for land acquisition, expansion and parking facility improvements; and Whatcom County - Lummi Is. Ferry Improvements (Gooseberry Point) - \$390,000 for new loading ramps, bus lane, new fire pumps for the ferry boat and extending of the existing breakwater. Both winners were encouraged by TransAid to modify previous requests to show a greater local interest. The result was revised project applications showing major increased project ownership (local match). In the case of Skagit County, participation increased from 25% to 50% while Whatcom County's match went from 20% (the minimum allowed) to 35%.

TransAid was also informed that the DOT project (Clinton Ferry Terminal - \$2,500,000 for replacing and modernizing the existing terminal facilities), which had been earmarked

for funding but was inadvertently passed over by FHWA, will in fact be funded.

WSDOT CONTINUES TO IMPROVE WORKING RELATIONS WITH TRIBES

WSDOT staff met on November 25, 1996 with a Makah and Lummi tribal member who were acting on behalf of Indian Tribes in Washington State. This meeting was a result of a commitment made by WSDOT and the Tribes at the 1996 Annual Tribal/State meeting to set the stage for further development of a Tribal/WSDOT Memorandum of Agreement to promote mutually beneficial working relationships between the various Tribes and WSDOT.

The consensus of the meeting was that the agreement must be somewhat general to allow for various needs and capabilities of each of the tribes as well as the WSDOT regions. It was understood that revenues are likely to remain at or below existing levels for the immediate future for both the Tribes and WSDOT, and that expectations should focus not on new funding sources but on the long term benefits of coordination (ie., better working relationships and more efficient use of available resources). Continuing dialogue is expected to result in an agreement.

STAMPEDE PASS SERVICE FROM AUBURN TO PASCO UP & RUNNING

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) resumed regular freight service between Auburn and Pasco on December 7, following the installation of concrete ties and welded rail along selected segments as well as the replacement of snowsheds at the tunnel portals. BNSF continues to work with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and WSDOT's TransAid to identify potential grade crossing equipment upgrades along the Stampede Pass line.

On the legal front, the United States District Court in Seattle was scheduled to hear oral arguments in late November concerning the City of Auburn's suit against King County, Kittitas County and BNSF. The suit, originally filed by the city in the state courts, contends the counties should have pursued environmental reviews and required permits for BNSF's construction work on the Stampede Pass line. In late September, the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) ruled that federal law pre-empts state and local authorities from issuing permits and requiring mitigation for the railroad's work on the line. The STB has filed to be a party in the District Court case with the counties and the railroad. Auburn officials have indicated that they are also considering possible legal action against the STB and the railroad at the federal appellate level.

NEW APPLICATION COULD MEAN FUNDING FROM SIB

The 1997 Federal Appropriation Bill provided a new opportunity for more states to participate in the federal State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) pilot program and \$150 million in new funds were appropriated. The original

pilot program allowed 10 states to be designated as participants and no additional funding was provided. Although Washington took aggressive steps to be included as one of the first 10 states, when the final selections were made, Washington was not designated. Follow-up discussions with USDOT representatives indicated that Washington's application was attractive, but needed more projects in addition to those submitted -- projects that could be more quickly implemented. In addition, USDOT suggested that if more states were allowed to participate in the future, Washington should re-apply and should provide more details on how loans from the bank could be paid back from proposed projects.

The new application period is now open and the deadline is December 20. To meet the deadline and to enhance the application as advised by USDOT, the Transportation Economic Partnerships Division organized an out-reach effort to the regions to identify more candidate projects. As a result, five new projects are being submitted.

PARK & RIDE FEASIBILITY STUDY TO BE COMPLETE IN JANUARY

The ongoing feasibility studies for the King County/WSDOT/Perini Park and Ride Enhancement Project are scheduled to be complete in January 1997. These studies include preliminary design and cost estimating of additional structured parking at 16 park and ride locations, preliminary permitting activities, site by site demand determination and a public involvement program. With voter approval of Regional Transit Authority (RTA), King County has requested a funding partnership with the county and RTA in order to reduce or eliminate parking fees as a source of revenue for lot improvements. A considerable amount of work has been done by the project team on 11 of the 20 sites planned by RTA to be improved and to provide additional service. The Transportation Economic Partnerships Division is continuing discussions with King County Department of Transportation staff and coordinating the issue with John Okamoto, Northwest Region. Following the completion of the feasibility studies, another round of public meetings is planned for early next year. It is expected that the financing strategies, as well as site specific plans for the project, will be presented at that time.

SR 16/TACOMA NARROWS ALTERNATIVES SHRINK TO NINE

Nine alternatives were advanced by the SR 16/Tacoma Narrows Stakeholders Committee to the next phase of the Major Investment Study (MIS) now underway. Twenty-two alternatives were evaluated using a number of measures including mobility, accident potential, environmental impacts and cost effectiveness.

The SR 16/Tacoma Narrows walk in office will open in early December and is located at 1612 South Mildred, Suite B, in Tacoma. The office will house the United Infrastructure Company (UIC) project staff, as well as historical project information, technical reports and a customer service area.

ECONorthwest will begin their work on establishing the geographic boundary for the SR 16/Tacoma Narrows advisory election in December. This scope of work will create independent traffic and economic models to establish preliminary boundaries as directed in the statute.

FERRY TERMINAL PROJECT UPDATE

Vashon:

The project to close the main slip for replacement of the transfer span bridge has been awarded. Construction is scheduled for the Winter of 1996-97. The auxiliary slip will remain open, but the terminal will not be able to accommodate two vessels at the dock at one time. The closure will occur in January/February 1997. A maintenance contract for Vashon, Southworth and Fauntleroy addressing wingwalls, dolphins and trestle piles will start the end of November.

Bainbridge:

WSF's planning and environmental work for the overhead passenger loading and trestle widening is proceeding. The contract for the emergency generator and the shore power upgrade for the Jumbo Mark II's is ready for advertisement. The Corps of Engineers permit has been issued. State agencies have issued the appropriate permits. The local agency permits are pending and may be issued by early December. This will be followed by a 30 day review by the Department of Ecology.

WSF's work with the ferry terminal long-term improvements is reaching a milestone and is scheduled to be published in a DEIS that addresses the city's overall master plan. The city is expressing concerns on several issues including funding, growth estimates, planning horizons and the assignment of the third vessel on the Seattle-Bainbridge route.

Bremerton:

Terminal Engineering continues to coordinate the Overhead Loading Project with the Sinclair Landing project.

Bremerton Passenger-Only:

Final determination of modifications necessary to the Bremerton passenger-only terminal will be made once details of the new passenger-only vessels are known. Sinclair Landing Associates is planning the major modifications to the passenger-only facility needed to take advantage of the bow loading capability of these vessels as part of the terminal redevelopment plan.

Seattle Master Development Plan:

The consultant design team is in the process of developing alternative concepts. Review by WSF and the other partners and modification of the alternatives is ongoing. A draft master plan, outlining alternatives for future development, remains scheduled for completion by January 31, 1997.

Seattle Pedestrian Access Replacement (Elevators):

This project will provide two new elevators and a new staircase making the passenger level of the terminal ADA accessible. Construction began in November. Plans for completion are June of 1997.

Seattle Passenger-Only:

Improvements at Pier 50 Passenger Only (P-O) terminal include the replacement of the existing barge with a refurbished barge surplus by the Navy and the construction of a new float to support the new bow-loading P-O vessels. Replacement of the existing barge is scheduled for February 1997

Edmonds:

On September 3rd the Edmonds City Council voted to deny the appeal and move to grant the shoreline permit with some minor added conditions. Shortly afterward, the original appellant filed another appeal to the State Shoreline Hearings Board. WSF is scheduled for a hearing before the Board on February 28, 1997.

Lopez:

The contract to install the emergency generator and upgrade the electrical service at Lopez has begun. The work should be completed by the end of November. WSF is preparing a contract in response to some emergency conditions on the property which should address some drainage and slope stability concerns.

GRADE CROSSING CRITERIA HELPS IN ASSESSMENT EFFORT

The Planning Office developed an outreach package to identify grade crossing criteria. The outreach will extend to RTPOs and the regions. Criteria will include exposure as well as delay/congestion calculations. The database of grade crossings is continually being refined and is being used in the Grade Crossing Assessment effort and the FAST Corridor Study. A statewide map was prepared showing strategic freight corridors and their relative tonnage flows. These will be used by FMAC in its effort to prepare policy to direct a new state program for freight mobility.

KINGDOME INTERMODAL ACCESS PROJECT MOVES TO PHASE TWO

The partners have come to a consensus on a draft agreement to define the Kingdome Area Intermodal Access project, and it is now being circulated for final review and approval. The project includes a congestion threshold that will trigger the implementation of Phase Two of the project, the S Royal Brougham Way westbound grade separation structure. The agreement also includes an official project name change to "SR 519 Intermodal Access Project." The Environmental Assessment is to be turned into OSC and FHWA/FTA in the first week of December.

RIDESHARE HOTLINE SIGNS INSTALLED

The first of approximately 400 roadway signs promoting a new 1-888 rideshare information phone number are being installed. The new phone number and design for the signs evolved out of a bigger project being managed for the central Puget Sound transit agencies by the Office of Urban Mobility. A

related public education campaign will get underway after the first of the year. Callers to the new number will be immediately routed to either Community Transit, King County/Metro, Pierce Transit, Intercity Transit or Kitsap Transit.

POLICE TRAFFIC COLLISION REPORT FORM AVAILABLE SOON

Transportation Data Office (TDO) staff have been coordinating the training for implementation of the new Police Traffic Collision Report (PTCR) effective January 1, 1997. The implementation of the new PTCR is part of the Collision Reporting and Statistical History project. The training will be conducted December 11 and 13 using the Washington Interactive Television network and will broadcast to 23 different cities. A training video is under production to be used in these training sessions, and as a future tool to instruct law enforcement officers on the use of the new form. An instruction manual has also been prepared to assist law enforcement officers in completing the new forms. The new Vehicle Collision Report, used by the public, will be implemented shortly after the first of the year.

CONSOLIDATED PLANNING GRANT PILOT PROGRAM DISCUSSED

On Friday, November 22, 1996, representatives from the WSDOT Planning Office and the Public Transportation and Rail Division met with Helen Knoll, the FTA Region 10 Administrator, Gene Fong, FHWA Division Administrator, and their staff to discuss consolidation of federal planning grants. An understanding was met that before any further negotiation could proceed, the MPO's should be brought into the discussions. It is expected that several more meetings will be required before WSDOT can become a Pilot Program for consolidating federal planning grants. Helen Knoll and Bill Kappus agreed to discuss the issue with the MPOs at the December 4, 1996 Coordinating Committee meeting.

BOND SALE PROCEEDS TO SUPPORT NUMEROUS PROJECTS

The State Finance Committee sold a Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax refunding bond issue in November. The refunding issue replaced \$30 million in bonds paying 6.3% interest with \$31 million in bonds paying 4.3% interest. Gross saving are \$1.8 million and present value saving are \$1.4 million.

Under authority delegated by the Transportation Commission, the Secretary requested the State Finance Committee sell bonds in January 1997. Proceeds from the sale of these bonds will be used to support construction of "Jumbo" ferries, Special Category C highway projects, public-private initiatives, federal demonstration highway projects and emergent highway projects.

NORTH CENTRAL COMING ON-LINE FOR VIDEO CONFERENCING

The department's video conference capabilities are expanding. Orders have now been placed for two digital circuits and video hardware to bring North Central Region on-line for video conferencing. With this addition to the North Central Region the total so far is 13 video network stations for

conferencing. As more users take advantage of video conferencing, travel time and costs will be reduced significantly.

CLAIMS RECEIVED FOR MV KITSAP GROUNDING

More than 70 requests for tort claim forms have been received as a result of the September MV Kitsap grounding incident, yet only 19 claims have been received through November 25, 1996. Based on the US Coast Guard investigation, the vessel master is being charged with negligence and misconduct. Therefore, liability for property or bodily injury damages is not a question in these claims, only the validity of claimed damages must be determined.

WSDOT GETTING PAID ELECTRONICALLY

Accounting Services staff worked with the State Treasurer's Office to establish Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) receipt procedures so WSDOT can be paid electronically by customers that owe us money. The first receipt of \$2.2 million from Weyerhaeuser was received the week of November 18. Arrangements have also been made with the Army at Fort Lewis and Indian Health Services. Because of a new federal law passed in July 1996 that requires all federal agencies to pay either with a credit card or by EFT, it is expected that more customers will be paying this way. Procedures were handed out at the November 19 Financial Action Team (FACT) meeting and also e-mailed to FACT members not present due to the snowstorm.

Accounting Services staff shared DOT's process for paying local governments by EFT with the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED). They are hoping to piggyback onto the same local distribution process that WSDOT uses. By working together, we hope that both departments can influence the State Treasurer to increase the number of distributions to locals each month. We are currently limited to four distributions per month, even though more had been requested. The State Treasurer schedule for 1997 does not show any increase in the number of distributions for our agency.

CONTRACT ADS AND AWARDS

October 1996 Bids were opened on three preservation projects for a total of three new contracts. The total engineer's estimate was \$1,935,090, with total bids of \$1,825,721, or 5.65% below the estimate. There were 209 uncompleted contracts with a total work in progress dollar value of \$1,140,107,759.08.

QUALITY ITEMS:

WSF TQM PILOT TEAM RECOGNIZED FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

The WSF TQM Pilot Team was recognized by the 1996 AASHTO Standing Committee on Quality. The WSF Purchasing Payable Review Team was identified as a "Trailblazer for Initiative in Quality Team Activity". The WSF Pilot Team applied along with other Transportation Teams around the United States stated what quality concepts and tools they used as a process

improvement team. The WSF group provided measurement data of decreased time in invoice payment and noted the improved communications and morale between the Purchasing and Accounts Payable Departments over the last two years.

STEERING COMMITTEE TRAINED IN PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

The P&PSC Quality Steering Committee attended a two day class on Managing Process Improvements. The class took the committee through a series of steps from identifying a process, to selecting the right processes for improvement, to initiating improvement efforts, and finally how to sustain the initiatives once improvements have been made. Following deployment, this class marks the beginning of actually identifying problems and working on solutions within a "Learning Organization" culture.

NATURAL WORK GROUP TO REVIEW EXTERNAL AUDIT PROCESS

A natural work group, consisting of members in the External Audit Branch of the WSDOT Audit Office has been formed to review various components of the external audit process that impact this organization as well as customers. The process is being used as a mechanism to provide training to staff, in addition to obtaining an understanding of the tools that can be utilized in a "formal quality process".

AUDIT OFFICE CREATING FASTER QUALITY SERVICE

As part of the normal (continuous) process to serve internal and external customers, the Audit Office has undertaken steps to redistribute and add new job functions to various staff within the office. These activities include the development of an Audit Office Home Page document as a means for our customers to access information about the services provided by the audit office, review the Washington State Executive Ethics Boards opinions regarding questions about the ethics law as well as view our external audit publication-Audit Guide for Consultants. In addition, key activities such as the accounting functions, will have two people identified as back up. This will provide better service to our own staff who may have had to wait for submittal of travel vouchers. Customers' questions regarding ethics will now be directed to four individuals rather than the current two, in order to provide faster response time to questions asked by department employees and individuals outside WSDOT.

CONTACT MADE EASY FOR PROJECT SUPPORT CUSTOMERS

Beginning with this month's billings, Project Support Services has been attaching labels to the billing documents. The labels identify a contact person if the customer has questions regarding the billing. The monthly billing documents will be revised at some point to have this information, but in the interim the labels will be used. Many positive comments have been received from customers who used to be transferred several times before getting in touch with someone who could help them.

GOOD NEWS ITEMS:

I-705 CLOSURE RESULTS IN SR 509 URBAN INTERCHANGE PROGRESS

The contractor for the new SR 509 urban interchange in Tacoma made substantial work progress during a November 22 weekend closure of I-705. The total closure was necessary to remove falsework (construction framework) from the SR 509 structure over the I-705 lanes. The work was critical to completion of the new interchange and needed to be completed before moving on to the next stage of construction. As a result of the progress made during this closure, a potential second closure in December, which was cause for considerable concern from the Tacoma business community, will not be necessary until after the holiday shopping season. I-705 provides direct access to downtown Tacoma and waterfront businesses along Schuster Parkway. The new SR 509 corridor is moving toward a January 1997 opening to traffic.

WASHINGTON RECEIVES NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY GRANT FUNDS

HCP received verbal confirmation from the Federal Highways Administration that Washington state successfully leveraged \$539,863 in federal funds with state matching funds for scenic byway projects. Out of thirty states competing for funds, Washington received 4.5% of the \$12 million available to carry out eligible scenic byway projects nationwide. Funded project activities include developing corridor management plans for four state scenic byways and constructing overlooks and interpretive sites.

EDUCATION PROGRAM TO BE USED IN SCENIC/RURAL AREAS

The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, in partnership with the National Park Service, Federal Highways Administration, and WSDOT, just completed an innovative slide program and handbook entitled "Scenic Towns." This program is an educational tool for local citizens, agencies, developers, and byway organizations in scenic and rural areas nationwide. Copies will be distributed to byway groups statewide and regions may borrow the program from the Heritage Corridor Program in January.

NW REGION RECOGNIZED FOR SUPPORTING WORK & FAMILY LIFE

WSDOT's Northwest Region Office was nominated recently for the 1996 Work and Family Progress Award from Child Care Advantages, a program supported by the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. This award recognizes employers who have work/family programs that are enhancing the lives of their employees and their employees' families as well as the community.

WSDOT TEAMWORK MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The Bridge and Structures Office recently received positive comments from Northwest Region staff regarding unscheduled work on SR 536/Skagit River Pier Protection. The Region applauded Bridge and Structures staff efforts at getting the job out to bid, and for the quality and completeness of the bridge plans. In addition, the NW Region felt support and availability prevented any delays to construction.

REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (RTA) PROGRAM PASSES

The RTA's \$3.9 billion Sound Move program was approved by voters on November 5 by a solid majority of 58 percent. The project, which includes electric light rail, commuter rail, express bus service, and High Occupancy Vehicle ramps will be fully implemented in ten years. Coordination efforts have already begun with several discussions taking place between WSDOT and RTA officials. John Okamoto, Northwest Region Administrator, has been assigned responsibility for WSDOT/RTA coordination efforts.

GRANT TRANSIT AUTHORITY (GTA) TO RECEIVE FUNDING

On November 5, 1996, Grant County citizens passed a ballot measure increasing local sales tax by .2 percent to fund the GTA. The sales tax increase will net approximately \$1.4 million to pay for public transportation within the Public Transportation Benefit Area boundaries. The sales tax will also bring in matching Motor Vehicle Excise Tax funds of \$1.4 million to provide public transportation.

The GTA is currently providing transit service funded through the Rural Mobility Grant Program. WSDOT provided technical assistance during the transit service demonstration project and will also provide assistance during the start-up of the transit system.

RIDESHARE WEEK WAS A "MOVING" EXPERIENCE

The Washington State Ridesharing Organization (WSRO) concluded its annual statewide Rideshare Week promotional campaign with a drawing for big prizes. The drawing was held in the Commission Board Room on November 1 and Secretary Morrison selected the winners.

This year's statewide campaign motivated 18,384 individuals to try an alternative commute mode during the week of October 14-18 and enter the drawing. This was an increase of 25 percent over last year's participation. Upon closing the drawing ceremony, Secretary Morrison issued a challenge to WSRO by encouraging the organization to aim for 25,000 participants in 1997.